CROYDON PHILATELIC SOCIETY:

NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD 25 June 2019

Unfortunately the speaker was delayed because of a prior accident, not involving him, which had occurred on his route to the meeting. Croydon member **Richard Berry** filled the gap in the proceedings with a variety of **Forces Postal History** material which he had not yet mounted. These included French internee mail from World War 2 and a letter addressed to a Russian Princess which had been redirected from Paris to Pornichet.

When the speaker **Marcus-Sherwood Jenkins** arrived **President Graham Harker,** after thanking **Richard Berry,** introduced him to the 14 members plus one guest and invited him to show his **Russian and Soviet Prison Mail.** The first item was an 1820 letter from one of the officials escorting prisoners to Siberia, which involved walking several thousand miles, over several months, as this was well before railways were built. This is the only letter known from this period and was indicative of the quality of the material on show. When the prisoners arrived in Siberia they were there as exiles in communities rather than in walled prisons.

This was followed by mail to and from the Prison Inspection Department, the Secret Police, female political prisoners all exiles in Siberia. Mail concerning prisoners on Sakhalan Island which is an island off the coast of North Japan was also on show. The island was for those convicted of serious offences such as murder and rape with pictures of these offenders chained to wheelbarrows were also seen.

Every type of document associated with the prison was on display including postal seals, censor marks, cards and envelopes with iodine marks across them to discover invisible writing and one stamp with a message on the back.

The 1917 Revolution and the institution of the concentration camps, gulags and the arrest and assassination of millions of political prisoners over the following years followed. There was a paper shortage until the 1930 and there were revolts and uprisings in some of the camps including Veneza Gulag which were put down with tanks and aircraft and many were killed.

Vice President Frank Simpson gave the vote of thanks for a fascinating display which demonstrated a very impressive depth of research and study which the members had greatly appreciated. The meeting came to a close at 21.15 hours following members viewing the display.

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Brian Asquith & Graham Harker

29.06.19